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ANSWER

TO THE

REFLECTIONS

OF THE

RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE.

BRITISH MUSEUM
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FEB

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RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE.

DUPONT (G. P. M.)

By M. DEPONT.

WITH THE ORIGINAL NOTES.

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M. DEPONT,

TO THE REFLECTIONS OF

THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE.

M. DEPONT, the young Gentleman to whom Mr. BURKE addreſſed his celebrated Pamphlet on the Revolution in France, was ſome time ago in England, and he had the honour to enjoy the hoſpitality of Beaconsfield. On the late great event in France, he wrote a letter to Mr. BURKE, requeſting that as he had learnt the firſt rudiments of Government at his table, he would favour him with his opinions on the tranſactions then paſſing in France.—Mr. BURKE, with great complacency, ſat down to gratify the wiſhes of his young Correſpondent, and wrote his ſentiments freely in a letter of a couple of ſheets—but this letter he kept by him for a time, from a friendly apprehenſion, that if it fell into the hands of the violent ſpi-

rits of Paris, M. DEPONT might fall a ſacrifice to his deſire of knowledge. This he intimated to M. DEPONT, who relieved him from his delicacy, by an aſſurance that the poſt was inviolable—that there was no ſuch danger—and that there was nothing he coveted ſo much as the opinions of Mr. BURKE, on the ſcene of which all Europe was at that moment the ſpectator. Mr. BURKE complied, and ſent him the letter; at the ſame time informing him, that he had turned his thoughts more ſeriouſly to the ſubject, which he ſhould alſo communicate to him. This intimation ended in the celebrated pamphlet, which, for the laſt three months, has been the ſubject of general diſcuſſion.

Mr. BURKE, from the ſame delicate regard to his correſpondent, ſtudiouſly concealed his name. M. DEPONT, however, has himſelf diſcloſed the ſecret, and has given leave for the publication of his anſwer. It is not improbable but from the ſame valuable ſource we may be honoured with the firſt letter of Mr. BURKE, for which we are ſenſible how much our readers would be indebted to us.

M. DUPONT'S

M. DEPONT'S ANSWER.

TO

MR. BURKE'S REFLECTIONS.

"SIR,

"When I laſt year took the liberty of aſking in what manner you conſidered the political events of France, I certainly did not imagine that my letter could give occaſion to the publication of the work you have had the goodneſs to ſend to me. I will even own, that I would not have hazarded my queſtion had I been aware what effect it would produce, and that if your opinions had been then known to me, far from engaging you to diſcloſe them, I ſhould have intreated you to withhold them from the public.

"I would have repreſented to you that the ſingle authority of your name would give ſome degree of hope to the vanquiſhed party in France, and that to encourage that party to make new attempts, was to expoſe it to new dangers (1). I ſhould have agreed with you on ſome of the errors which the National Aſſembly muſt neceſſarily have committed in the midſt of the agitations

and ſhocks which that body has experienced; but I ſhould have laboured to perſuade you that time, experience, and reflection, were the only proper correctives for theſe errors, and that to attempt to correct them inſtantly, would be to expoſe my country anew to the troubles and evils of every kind which for almoſt two years continue to afflict it, and which ſo cruelly diſtreſs the true friends of humanity.

" I would have endeavoured to convince you, that the anarchy, the miſchiefs of which you paint ſo forcibly, muſt be dreadfully protracted, if the only authority in which the Nation confided were made the object of attack. I might, perhaps, have been able to prevent one of the warmeſt friends of liberty, in his own country, from ranging himſelf with the Advocates of Deſpotiſm in mine (2). Yes, Sir, your ſuſceptible and worthy heart has been too ſtrongly affected with the evils that have attended our Revolution, not to fear expoſing it to evils ſtill more dreadful, in a manner by involuntarily ſerving the party which dares to wiſh for a Counter-Revolution, and which thinks that our Conſtitution *ought to be purified by fire and by blood.*

" This

"This motive, Sir, I am confident, would have determined you to preſerve ſilence, if you had not been afraid of the re-action of the tranſactions in our country upon your own: This ſentiment, which may be perceived in the courſe of your work, ought to be deeply impreſſed on the mind of every good Engliſhman, and the apprehenſion of ſeeing his country abandon a real bleſſing for an ideal and remote advantage, appears to me very natural.

"I will even own, Sir, that at the hazard of appearing a bad patriot to ſome of the innovators, the greater part of whoſe ſentiments I have adopted, I would have ſtrenuouſly oppoſed every ſort of change in France, if our former Government had been as good as yours, and if our individual liberty had been equally ſecured. But can we really, Sir, compare the ſituation of the two countries? I am very far from thinking that a Revolution is at all times, or in all reſpects, a happy event (3). But was it not become indiſpenſable in France at the moment at which it happened? It was not the 5th of October, on which it was effected, as you appear to ſuppoſe, by not looking for its origin to an earlier period, and detaining us ſo long on the detail of that dreadful day, the account of which

ought

ought to be torn from our hiſtory. The Revolution was already effected, and the events of the 5th and 6th of October, added to every other ſpecies of atrocity, the moſt abſolute inutility. It was on the days of the 13th and 14th July 1789 (4), that the conteſt originated between oppreſſive authority, and riſing liberty; it was at this moment that the French nation expreſſed its ſentiments with the greateſt energy, and obtained the moſt complete triumph. Truſt me, Sir, ſince that period good citizens have frequently lamented the abuſe of their power by ſome malicious or miſguided individuals, who can by no means be confounded with the body of the people, except by their enemies, who have an intereſt in repreſenting them in the moſt odious point of view. You are too juſt, and too impartial, Sir, to attribute to the nation the crimes committed on the 5th and 6th October; and you know me ſufficiently to be convinced, that I entertain the ſame ſentiments as you, with regard to this melancholy tranſaction, which you ſo pathetically deſcribe.

" But permit me, Sir, to remind you of ſome facts which happened previous to thoſe days and which have been mis-ſtated to you by ſome

ſome Frenchmen, whoſe intereſt it was to repreſent France, ſuch as it ought to have been, and not ſuch as it really was at the opening of the States General. France, you ſay, needed then only to pay ſome new taxes in order to bring the public receipt and expenditure to a level. But did not the people, Sir, already groan under the load of ſubſidies ſo much the more oppreſſive, that they were exacted by the moſt arbitrary government. Had not a National Bankruptcy been already pronounced by an *Arret* of Council (5)? You talk of laws, of religion, of opinion, which tempered the effects of deſpotiſm, and made it exiſt rather in appearance than in reality (6). Laws, Sir! But had not the moſt reſpectable laws, and till that inſtant the moſt ſacred, been violated? Was not Juſtice herſelf dumb? Anarchy prevailed in every part of the realm (7). Religion! But did it temper in France the effects of deſpotiſm in the period of ignorance, fanaticiſm, and ſuperſtition (8). Opinion! But was it not in general then expreſs in oppoſition to the exiſting form of Government (9)? Were not men who are now moſt divided in intereſt, then united by the common intereſt of reſiſting oppreſſion? Did not the officers, who complain with ſo much force and ſo much juſtice of the want of ſubordi-

nation

nation among the ſoldiers, ſet the example of reſiſtance to the execution of arbitrary and illegal orders? Did not the Magiſtrates, who moſt condemn the reprehenſible exceſſes of the people, then regard them as indiſpenſable (10)? Was not the inſurrection general againſt that Government, which you find ſo favourable to the population, commerce, and proſperity of the empire? Ought it not then to be granted, Sir, by every perſon who has been able to trace in this country the ſeries of political events, and who has no intereſt to aſcribe the Revolution to other cauſes, that the depoſed Government could no longer ſubſiſt (11).

"But you, Sir, ſay, that inſtead of making innovations, we ſhould have endeavoured to reform, and improve (12). How! the firm and courageous man, who roſe with ſo much vigour againſt the abuſes of his own country; the man, who in the Parliament of England, on the 11th of February 1780, pronounced theſe remarkable words:

"There is a time when men will not ſuffer
"bad things becauſe their anceſtors have ſuffered
"worſe.—There is a time when the hoary head

"of

" of inveterate abuſe will neither draw reve-
" rence, nor obtain protection*.

" Some valuable perſons, reſpected by poth parties, were of opinion that the ancient diviſion of orders ought to be replaced by a ſecond Chamber, nearly ſimilar to that which exiſts in your country. But, without examining the great queſtion, whether the unity of the Legiſlative Body, with proper reſtrictions and modifications, is not preferable; without referring to the particular circumſtances which gave the people reaſon to apprehend that the Nobility, who had ſhut them out from admiſſion to all employments, might, when they again appeared in a different form (13), take occaſion to uſurp the ſame advantages; ought it not to be admitted, that the exceſſive eulogiums, which were given to your Conſtitution, were more calculated to prevent us from cepting than to perſuade us to adopt it (14)? Free nations are too zealous eaſily to yield to their neighbours any ſuperiority, eſpecially in what reſpects their Conſtitution.

* Speech of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke on preſenting a Plsn for the Œconomical Reformation of the Civil and other Eſtabliſhments.

"I have hitherto, Sir, endeavoured to prove to you, that if the Revolution of France did not commence with you till the moment at which the Clubs of London and Dr. PRICE took it under conſideration, with us it goes back to a period much more remote, and that its origin muſt be ſought before the criſis, at which the States General being convoked, the part of the nation the moſt numerous, the moſt unfortunate, and the moſt oppreſſed, had recorded their deſire, that the votes ſhould be collected individually by orders, in inſtructions very different from thoſe in which you ſee only a deſire of reforming ſome abuſes. I will not, Sir, attempt to reply to the different articles of your work, I ſhould too evidently injure the cauſe, which I wiſh to defend, by entering the liſts with you. This noble and glorious taſk I leave to ſome man more worthy of being your antagoniſt, and will content myſelf with communicating to you ſome haſty reflections, intended to convince you that my love for Liberty has not been weakened by the incidental oppreſſion of ſome individuals; that the horrors, with which the paſt troubles have inſpired me, has tended only to increaſe my fear of ſeeing them renewed, and

that

that your charge againſt Dr. Price, of taking the deviation from principles for the principles themſelves, is not applicable to me (15).

" You lament, Sir, the weakneſs of the executive power, and the influence of the Committees of the National Aſſembly; theſe are circumſtances which I alſo lament, but I do not think it neceſſary to excite a civil war in France, in order to reſtore an order of things, to which reaſon muſt naturally lead (16).

" You lament, Sir, the poverty of the people for the preſent moment, and I likewiſe lament it: But I rely much on the means which will be ſuggeſted by that Committee * (17), the inſtitution of which you ſeem to condemn; and I am of opinion, that in order to reſtore peace to the country, and recal emigrants, we ought not to excite freſh troubles (18).

" You lament the ſuſpenſion of public credit; and I, Sir, likewiſe lament it: But I do not think that the beſt method of reviving it is to attack the different operations of the National Aſſembly, and

* The Committee of Mendicity.

to perſuade the landed and monied intereſts that they are neceſſarily enemies, when, in fact, they muſt ſtand or fall together (19).

" You lament, Sir, the defection of the troops; and I alſo lament it: But I have recovered confidence from the conduct of the National Guards, and the troops of the line in the affair of Nancy, and from the ſincere repentance of the fleet at Breſt; and I am convinced that a common danger will always unite all Frenchmen (20).

" You lament the ſcandalous ſpectacle exhibited to all Europe by the inteſtine diviſions of the Members of the National Aſſembly; and I no leſs lament it, and frequently have felt the moſt poignant regret, in ſeeing ſome Frenchmen, unworthy of the name, calumniate, and ſhamefully traduce their country. But does not even the impunity of ſuch men prove their liberty? And can a man, ſeparated from us only by ſome miles, maintain, that an Aſſembly is not free, when he knows that one of its Members propoſed, with vehemence, in that very Aſſembly, a plan for a counter-revolution, and that it was liſtened to with coolneſs (21).

" You

" You lament the rigour with which the Eccleſiaſtics have been treated; and I, Sir, alſo lament it: But I cannot ſee how religion is attacked, or Atheiſm eſtabliſhed, becauſe the ſalary of public Miniſters, employed in the ſervice of devotion, is not large (22).

" You complain of the organization of the Judiciary Power; and I, Sir, find it not free from defects: But for theſe I am conſoled by the eaſe with which they may be rectified, and by the great advantage acquired in the inſtitution of Juries, of which you ſpeak not a word (23).

" You lament the violation of feudal property; and I likewiſe regret the misfortune of ſome individuals (24): But I think that there ſtill remains another method of indemnifying them, without invading the property of M. M. de la ROCHEFOUCAULT, de NOAILLES, and de la BORDE.

" You lament the creation of paper money; and I, Sir, likewiſe lament it: But I am conſoled by the reflection, that it is only temporary (25), and

and that it tends to facilitate an operation productive of the greateſt advantages.

" You find the number of municipalities too great; and I am of the ſame opinion: But I think that it will be more eaſy to diminiſh, when the people ſhall perceive that it is their true intereſt (26).

" You are afraid of the National Militia; and I alſo might entertain the ſame fears, if I thought they were to continue on their preſent footing, and did not know that their ſpeedy organization will quickly diſpel all apprehenſions from that quarter.

" I am not ſo much alarmed as you, Sir, about the progreſs of the new political machine; and I am of opinion, that when once the principal wheels ſhall have been put in motion, the reſt will eaſily follow. In fine, Sir, I am inſpired with the higheſt confidence from the progreſs of that enlightened ſpirit, which you have ſo cruelly attacked, and from the liberty of the preſs, upon which you have not touched; and I am convinced that theſe economiſts, theſe philanthropiſts, theſe philoſophers, upon whom you ſpeak with ſo much aſperity,

aſperity, will contribute as much, by their writings, to the ſupport of liberty, and the re-eſtabliſhment of order, as thoſe famous paladins, thoſe knights errant, whoſe extinction you deplore, and whoſe very inſtitution proves that it was always neceſſary to oppoſe armed force to the exceſſes of a people more formidable, in proportion as they were leſs enlightened (27).

" I hope, Sir, that you find in this letter only the ſimple expreſſion of the moſt genuine regard for liberty, and that you will not diſcover the language of a man blinded by the ſpirit of Party. I will never be ſubſervient to the ambitious views of Miniſters or of demagogues (28), but I will always defend the Conſtitution, which I have ſworn to maintain. I wiſh not to exalt myſelf to the character of a reformer of mankind, or a miſſionary of the new French Inſtitutions. I believe, that an inhabitant of the Canton of Berne, or that an Engliſhman, may be free and happy, notwithſtand; ing the apparent Ariſtocracy of their Conſtitution. but I think, that a Frenchman, who ſhould deſpair of the ſafety of his country, and endeavour to foment new diſturbances, would be the moſt culpable of men, whilſt the ſage Engliſhman, who wiſhed

wiſhed to prevent thoſe diviſions ready to break out in his country, would diſcharge the moſt ſacred of duties. I flatter myſelf, Sir, that this opinion will coincide with your own, and, that in ſpite of our ſeeing the ſame object in oppoſite points of view, ſo natural in our different ſituations, you will preſerve the ſame friendſhip which you teſtified for me during my reſidence in England. I entertain the hope of being able to viſit it in the ſpring, and there renew to you the aſſurance of the ſentiments," &c. &c. &c.

FINIS.

NOTES.

(1) Experience has proved, that the fears of M. DUPONT were groundleſs. The work of M. BURKE has not more than that of M. CALONNE, revived the hopes of the mal-contents. All that they have written is to be found in books publiſhed every day; the period is fortunately paſt, when authority was attached to great names; nothing but argument can now operate to produce conviction. All the works which preach a Counter-revolution are regarded by men of ſenſe in the ſame light, as thoſe which preach what they dare call a *ſupplement of the Revolution*, namely, a maſſacre, or inſurrections, ſuch as happenened at Aix, and in Quercy. I hope that we are approaching the moment, when both ſhall be equally harmleſs.

(2) This want of conſiſtency is very common in France. I have frequently remarked, and, without doubt, it muſt have occurred to others, that thoſe people who had often talked in raptures of the exertions of the Engliſh, and particularly of the Americans, to acquire liberty, who ſaid that theſe nations were fortunate enough in having been able to arrive at it through oceans of blood, lamented, or pretended to lament, the evils with which its introduction had been attended in France. Nothing is ſo common as friends of liberty among the Ancients, and in Foreign Nations, who do not chuſe to make the ſmalleſt effort to ſecure it at home. Liberty, however, can only be eſtabliſhed in oppoſition to dif-

 ficulties

"Jalouse de la liberté ils se plient aisément à la servitude"
(Character of the Greeks by Descartes
in Voy. d'Anacharsis

ficulties, as a robuſt and ſturdy oak grows in ſpite of the rocks, which obſtruct its roots.

(3) It is becauſe a Revolution is not always, and in every inſtance a happy event; that they ought to be very cautious of attempting a change in the Government now eſtabliſhed in France. Be aſſured, that if it be bad, it will not ſubſiſt; time, and a very ſhort time only, are neceſſary to to do it juſtice: Any efforts which could be made to deſtroy it would only have the effect to ſubſtitute one much worſe; for it would be eſtabliſhed in the midſt of greater difficulties, and and after longer convulſions.

(4) I have pointed out the commencement of 1788, as the true epoch of the Revolution, and I perſiſt in that opinion. It was then that the People acquired the knowledge of their own power; they learned that nothing was wanting on their part but inclination, in order to obtain juſtice againſt their oppreſſors. With ſuch a conviction, it was impoſſible to deceive them longer; nor could the Baſtile be allowed to ſtand. It was in 1788 that the inſurrection commenced; it was then indiſpenſibly neceſſary, and became every day more ſo, till the month of July 1789. It was ſtill neceſſary to ſtruggle againſt the artifices of ſome Miniſters; but theſe obſtacles have been much exaggerated. When I ſpeak of the People, and of their power, I mean the whole body of the Nation, who alone have the right of making an inſurrection, of deſtroying one government, of ſubſtituting another, of removing and puniſhing their oppreſſors. Every part of the people is ſubject to the whole;

whole; the ſovereignty reſides in the nation at large: It delegates ſome functions; it intruſts ſome rights; the moſt frequent and ſometimes dangerous abuſe is made of the words Nation, People, Sovereignty, &c. It is every day ſaid, that the Municipal Officers, the Adminiſtrators, &c. are the Repreſentatives of the People. It is not true. The Municipal Officers, like the Judges, Adminiſtrators, Biſhops, Curates, &c. are perſons entruſted with the exerciſe of functions eſtabliſhed by the conſtitution. I do not know if it would be hazarding an idea, to ſay, that they differ only from the officers of whom the conſtitution has delegated the nomination to the KING, in the circumſtance of being differently elected; the one are appointed by the Diſtrict, the other by the KING. The conſtitution gives the Diſtrict the right of chuſing ſuch officers, and the KING the right of naming others, and neither are repreſentatives. The Legiſlature alone repreſents the People; it alone ſpeaks and ſtipulates in their name; the Nation alone is Sovereign; every part of the Nation is ſubject. Theſe principles are too little attended to; to me they appear not foreign to this diſcuſſion. The inſurrection of 1788 and 1789, is the work of the People; the revolt of the 5th of October is the work of ſome ſuborned ruffians, and ſome miſguided individuals.

(5) M. DEPONT might have added, that if the *States General* had conſented to furniſh means to equal the receipt to the expenditure, the extravagant depredations of perſons about the Court, would ſoon have occaſioned new wants, equally reaſonable with the former, and which muſt have

been provided for in the ſame manner. It is falſe beſides, that it was only neceſſary at this period to furniſh new Impoſts. It is evident to every ſenſible man, that the whole machine wanted reformation; the papers alone, which are ſo frequently mentioned, and ſo little underſtood, prove that the intention of the people was to reſtore the Monarchical Government to its true nature, and to diſengage it from the ſhackles of all ſorts, which had been impoſed by the Clergy and Nobles.

(6) No government is called deſpotic, which does not quickly become ſo in reality. It may be laid down as a general rule, that there ſubſiſts deſpotiſm, when the agents of authority cannot be legally compelled to repair the damage and injury, which they have occaſioned to a Citizen. Deſpotiſm then ſubſiſted in France, when no Miniſter, Intendant, or Deputy of an Intendant, could be proſecuted. I ought to add, that deſpotiſm would ſtill ſubſiſt, if the Committee of Reſearches, the Municipalities, and the National Guards could not be puniſhed for every arreſt, and every exerciſe of their authority, not only unjuſt, but illegal. I invite the friends of freedom, to concur with all their might to put a ſtop to an order of things, which circumſtances of the greateſt extremity ſcarcely juſtify; it is by ſpeedily finiſhing the plan of the Conſtitution, by organizing all the powers, that this terrible arm ſhall be taken away from the factious, and inſtead of acts of arbitrary authority, the laws ſhall be ſubſtituted as the protectors of all. It is to this object all our wiſhes ought to tend.

(7) No

(7) No country, without doubt, had ſo numerous or excellent laws as France; but in no country were they leſs obſerved; becauſe thoſe, who had the excluſive right of making them, reſerved to themſelves the privilege of infringing them.

(8) Religion neither prevented the deſpotiſm of Louis XI. and Louis XIV. nor the dreadful tranſaction of the league, the dragooning, &c. Religion, which is a powerful reſtraint upon individuals, has never been able to check Kings or Nations.

(9) It has frequently been ſaid, that opinion prevents deſpotiſm from proceeding to the moſt violent exceſs. Without doubt a deſpot ought to dread the conſequence of public opinion, if he ſhould order the one half of the nation to cut the throats of the other; yet, it is well known how few dared diſobey Charles IX. Opinion neither prevented the inſolent deſpotiſm of Louis XIV. nor the intemperate deſpotiſm of the Regent. Good inſtitutions alone prevent deſpotiſm. Good manners guard good inſtitutions, and education produces good manners. It is the Engliſh Government, which forms the men in that country, and the men who guard the Government. In fine, it is every where affirmed that cuſtom, religion, and opinion, temper deſpotiſm, and every where the aſſertion is ill-founded. I demand of Mr. Burke, whether law, religion, and opinion, prevented the *Lettres de Cachet*, the arbitrary impoſts, the militia, vaſſalage, exemptions, &c. and whether theſe conſtituted a real, or only

an

an apparent deſpotiſm. Under an able Prince or Miniſter, there exiſted the deſpotiſm of an individual; but when theſe wanted abilities, there was an ariſtocracy of deſpots: compare the Government of Cardinal RICHLIEU with the end of that of LOUIS XV.

(10) Every body muſt have heard in 1788, of the Magiſtates deſire, and endeavours to excite a civil war; and every body muſt have applauded their reſiſtance to the Miniſtry, and the prudence of Officers, who refuſed to employ force againſt Citizens. Why is their language now changed with circumſtances? Is it becauſe they wiſhed to protect the Magiſtrates againſt the Court, but not the People againſt the Great.

(11) M. DEPONT has not mentioned the numberleſs obſtacles, by which the Court, the Nobility, and Clergy, either openly or by ſecret machinations, attempted to embarraſs the progreſs of public affairs. Hiſtory will diſcloſe on this ſubject, ſome ſtrange particulars, and I hope to furniſh my quota of Anecdotes, but little known. In general, the influence which the errors of the Court had upon the events, from the month of January to the month of July 1789, does not ſeem to me to be ſufficiently taken into conſideration: it is not perceived, that if the Miniſter had poſſeſſed common ſenſe, he might have acquired immortal glory, by founding the liberty of his country; then all the advantages of the Revolution would have taken place, without any of its inconveniences; factions would not have been able to form; the factious would have been entirely deſtitute of weight, and

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even of a pretext. Many errors are imputed to the National Aſſembly, and with juſtice; they committed ſeveral, but fewer than the Miniſter, and the greater part of the Members had better intentions.

(12) This idea of Mr. BURKE is every where to be met with; inſtead of making innovations, they ſhould only have adopted the neceſſary improvements. But 1ſt, No improvements can be made, without deſtroying from their roots innumerable abuſes. 2dly, Have not the two priviledged Orders, prevented all poſſibility of adopting ſuch improvement; and has not their ſtubborn reſiſtance compelled the Commons to ſeparate themſelves from them altogether, 3dly, It is not ſufficiently perceived that the Declarations of the 23d of June, were a real change in the government; and yet theſe were not made by the Aſſembly, but by the KING himſelf. Indeed the Miniſters were in that inſtance betrayed too late into an ineffectual homage to reaſon; they ought to have been ſufficiently acquainted with men to have known that their artful preſent would be refuſed. Without doubt the refuſal was proper. If a Conſtitution, if a Government are the ſimple conceſſion of the Prince, he may, whenever he pleaſes, withdraw his own gift. An enlightened ſpirit had made too much progreſs at this period, to allow that the will of the Sovereign is ſufficient to ſecure the public liberty. Without doubt, individual liberty, civil liberty may be great under a deſpot, but they can never be ſecured, except by political liberty; this laſt alone guards all the reſt, and preſerves them from every attempt of violation of royal, and even popular tyranny. Thus has it been incumbent on

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the National Aſſembly to make innovations; theſe innovations it was impoſſible to avoid, as it was neceſſary that they ſhould ſubſtitute a new government, in the ſtead of a government already deſtroyed.

(13) I believe that only time and experience can reſolve the queſtion into which M. Depont declines to enter. What is now evident is, 1ſt, That it was impoſſible in 1789 to form two chambers; that this ſtep would have been impolitic and dangerous: 2dly, That a part, a diviſion of the legiſlative body, which ſhould review and examine the deliberations of the body itſelf, but without *veto* might have all the advantages of a ſecond chamber, and none of its numerous inconveniencies. I only ſuggeſt the idea, which requires long deliberation.

(14) I have already remarked that thoſe who now praiſe to the ſkies the Engliſh government, dreaded its introduction among us, at a time, when the moſt ardent friends of liberty would have been happy to obtain it.

(15) There is an error in reaſoning very common, but little attended to, of thoſe who inceſſantly confound the Revolution with the conſtitution. The Revolution is the ſubverſion of the former government; it is not the work of the National Aſſembly, nor of any individual; it is the action, by which the People expreſſed that they were weary of the yoke, and deſirous of freedom: can this be imputed to them as a crime, and can their right to act for themſelves be conteſted? The conſtitution is the work of the National Aſſembly,

Aſſembly, and yet it is not to this body that all the imperfections, which are to be found in it are to be imputed; it is to circumſtances of embarraſſment, the neceſſity of ſpeedily framing new regulations, the weakneſs or diſaffection of government, and the perfidy and guilt of ſome individuals. I would wiſh then that it ſhould for once be recollected that the Revolution was neceſſary, and of conſequence juſtifiable; that it is the work of the People; that the conſtitution is imperfect, but can only be judged of by experience, and matured by time.

It is by a ſimilar error in reaſoning that the Revolution is confounded with events, which have no connection with it, ſuch as thoſe of the 5th of October (as has been already remarked), thoſe of Nancy, Aix, Cahors, the Hotel de Caſtries, &c. &c. Theſe are, perhaps, calamities unfortunately inſeparable from every great revolution; but theſe are not the French Revolution; theſe are not, it cannot be too often repeated, the work of the nation: They are the crimes of ſome ruffians who may eſcape the puniſhment due to their villiany, but who cannot eſcape (at leaſt ſo the good would wiſh to believe), the remorſe of their own conſcience, the public infamy, with which they are inceſſantly purſued, and the execration of all poſterity. It is not recollected that no great change of Government can take place, of which all the ruffians, mal-contents, bankrupts, ſtock-jobbers, retainers of the court, all the dregs of the nation will not always endeavour to profit and mingle their baſe and unruly paſſions with the noble and grand paſſion of Liberty. All that Mr. BURKE ſays, in his page 92, againſt thoſe people about the Court, is the moſt ſcrupulous truth. But theſe ſurely are

not the perſons who wiſhed for liberty; nor did ſuch deſire the Revolution, by which freedom was to be effected, they deſired only confuſion and diſturbances, by which they might profit: But the confuſion, the diſturbances, the anarchy, were not, and could not be the wiſh of the nation; they were wearied of oppreſſion; they were deſirous of a good Government. Every thing that has not a relation to theſe objects is not their work, and cannot be imputed to them.

(16) Whatever Government be adopted, it is evident that much power muſt neceſſarily be depoſited in the hands of thoſe who are entruſted with carrying it into execution. It is likewiſe evident, that there is no liberty in a country, where a Committee of Reſearches of the National Aſſembly can arreſt or diſmiſs from confinement. If this order of things was permanent, we would be far from being free; but happily it is impoſſible that it ſhould ſubſiſt, the imperious law of neceſſity muſt quickly produce a change. I lament ſtill more bitterly than Mr. Burke this ſituation of affairs; but I am far from ſuppoſing the evil irremediable; there is a remedy in the public intereſt, which appoints a protecting power repreſſing all private intereſts, but ſubject to the ſupreme controul of public intereſt.— I might ſtill add, that the Agents of the Executive Power have greatly contributed to take away from its effect, by always addreſſing the National Aſſembly, when they were to act reſponſibly; by always conſulting the Committees, who have neither the right nor power to give advice; by ridiculouſly affecting declamations from the tribune, which could have no influence with men of ſenſe; in fine, by falling ſhort of that greatneſs of character, without which, Govern-

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ment cannot be conducted in a ſeaſon of Revolution. The conduct of M. de Bouille, in the affair of Nancy, is a ſtrong proof, that if Miniſters had purſued a firm and decided conduct, if they had known how to diſcharge their duty, they would have impoſed ſilence upon all cavillers, upon all declaimers; they would have benefited the public, and preſerved their own reputation.

(17) The Aſſembly, upon the report of the Committee *de Mendicite*, has ordered that a ſupply of 15 millions be furniſhed to accommodate the exigencies of the departments; the Report of the Committee is full of very enlightend views, and which might ſuggeſt ample matter for conſideration. It may be aſked, are the people at preſent as poor, as during the laſt years of the reign of Louis XIV. or during the Regency, or at the end of the reign of Louis XV. or even in 1786, 1787, and 1788? But at leaſt they are at preſent ſupported by the hope of bettering their ſituation, and by the certainty of an œconomical plan of Adminiſtration, upon which formerly they could have no reaſon to depend.

(18) Experience may be produced in favour of the opinion of M. Depont; the emigrations occaſioned by the outrage of the Hotel de Castries, have given to commerce, which had begun to revive, a blow, which it will perhaps long feel. May the friends of liberty, warned by this deplorable event, unite all their efforts to prevent the recurrence of a ſimilar misfortune.

(19) If the work of M. Depont was of a date more re-

cent, he might have added that credit appaers to reſume vigour; that the public effects acquire their true price, and will ſoon be perceived to be the only real and good property; every thing will tend to augment their value; the high price of the National Domains proves this fact to thoſe, to whom before it could not have been demonſtrated by the moſt ſimple theory.

(20) I believe that if all General Officers act like M. de Rochambeau, diſcipline will ſoon be reſtored in the army. Happily, however, revolts every day become leſs frequent.

(21) The diviſions which ſubſiſt in the Aſſembly, need not occaſion ſurpriſe, when we reflect, that it is compoſed of the moſt incoherent elements, the moſt heterogeneous parties; there is maintained a perpetual conflict, not only of all private intereſts againſt the public intereſt, but of all private intereſts againſt one another; ſufficient allowance is not made for the different paſſions, which neceſſarily agitate a new Aſſembly, vain of its power, apprehenſive of the future, and ſolicitous for the preſent. The men, of whom it is compoſed, are not judged ſuch as they are; they are tried by the ſtandard of an ideal perfection; it is not recollected that they are regulated by circumſtances, and that if they have been able to overcome ſome obſtacles, they could not be equally ſucceſsful with regard to all.

Beſides the moſt honeſt men, who had the beſt intentions, were at the ſame time the moſt unexperienced, the leaſt acquainted

quainted with intrigue, they were therefore moſt eaſily deceived by the artifice of the courtiers, who played upon their ſimplicity with great ſucceſs.

It is not ſufficiently perceived that there were in the Aſſembly few ſtateſmen, not merely as Mr. Burke ſays, on account of an improper choice, but becauſe it was impoſſible to chuſe properly in a country, where the Government had kept all its ſubjects at a diſtance from public affairs, where men of the greateſt abilities were obliged to affect ignorance, in order to ſhun ſuſpicion. If ſeveral members have diſplayed in the Aſſembly a ſuperiority of talents, and a depth of conception, too great a number of ſpeakers have come forward, deſtitute of thoſe powers of political combination, neceſſary in order to ſave a ſtate, and even ſuch ſpeakers have not been without ſucceſs. The French were ſo little acquainted with public affairs, that it was natural that they ſhould miſtake loquacity for talents; it was natural that they ſhould for ſome time be dazzled by fluency of diſcourſe. But the reputation of ſpeakers declines every day; in proportion as ideas are formed, the underſtanding demands information, and cannot be ſatisfied with words. Theſe ſpeakers, when brought in review before the judgment, are found merely to poſſeſs a fluency of words.

Every circumſtance has concurred to render this ſeſſion diſorderly, but perhaps particularly a cauſe mentioned by Duclos, and deſerving the attention of men of ſenſe. "Men of ſuperior talents," ſays he, "have frequently the misfortune to be aſſociated with fools, and perſons jealous

jealous of their own conſequence, their equals in rank and credit, and inimical to all thoſe views, of which they are themſelves incapable.

Theſe diviſions, and this oppoſition, however, admit of conſolation; the approaching legiſlature will be more orderly: in a ſhort time, without doubt, the party of oppoſition will no longer be hoſtile to the conſtitution. In a ſhort time, as in England, all parties, whatever in other reſpects be their opinions, will combine their intereſts from the neceſſity of preventing a new Revolution; they will range themſelves beneath the ſtandard of the laws, the protectors of all; in a ſhort time (it would be dreadful at leaſt to loſe the hope) the odious diſtinctions of Ariſtocrates and Demagogues will vaniſh; the ſmall number of perſons, who are ſtill deſirous of troubles, who call out fire and blood, is inceſſantly diminiſhing. Ah! if ever united by the ſacred love of our country, we in reality wiſhed to deliver it from the fury of the factious, who mangle its boſom, it would be quickly ſaved. May the glorious day dawn upon my eyes!

(22) I think that there ought to have been placed here an obſervation, which I have not met with. The Prieſts complained of the perſecution which they experienced, and compared their own ſituation to that of the firſt Chriſtians; and M. MONTLAUSIER ſaid, that they ought not to be torn from their palaces. The firſt Chriſtians had no palaces; they had not changed their wooden croſs into a croſs of gold; for they had no gold. The firſt Chriſtians were perſecuted for

for their religious opinions; it was attempted to compel them to renounce the worſhip of the Eternal, and to offer to falſe Gods, a ſacriliegeous incenſe; modern Prelates were only required to renounce the worſhip of Mammon, in order to adore with humility and charity a good God, in whoſe preſence all men are equal. They are allowed to enjoy their opinions; the law deprives them of a part of their ſcandalous opulence; there is here nothing in common with religious opinions. The firſt Chriſtians obeyed the laws, they were not the preachers of revolt; why are they not imitated by the Biſhops? In reality, no perſecution has been employed. I believe, that the Aſſembly have carried pretty far their ſeverity againſt the Titularies, but they have neither practiſed, nor wiſhed to practiſe perſecution againſt any individual.

(23) I believe that the Judiciary Order has very great defects; but the inſtitution, *Des Bureaux de Paix*, whoſe benign influence has already been felt in the country, compenſates a great number. And I truſt, that others will in time diſappear.

(24) Were a calculation to be made of the loſſes, which every individual pretends to have experienced, they would be found to exceed the ſpecie circulating in Europe; there is no perſon, who does not lament a loſs, or boaſt of a ſacrifice; nineteen twenties of the amount are exaggerated. They never take into their calculation, the indemnities, which they have obtained. Thus, if a man loſes a place, he does not calculate the exemption *des dixmes*, without doubt many individuals

individuals have great reaſon to complain; and I firmly believe, that the number of ſufferers might, and ought to have been leſs; but far from ſtill augmenting it by protracting anarchy, by again diſplacing thoſe, who begin to aſſume a ſituation ſomewhat fixed, let us combine all our efforts to prevent new diſorders.

(25) Since the date of M. Depont's Letter, ſome Aſſignats have been burnt; their number is indeed ſmall, but the very rapid ſale of the National Property, gives reaſon to hope that they will ſoon burn many more.

(26) It is not merely the number of Municipalities, which Mr. Burke attacks, it is likewiſe their compoſition; I am of opinion that it is in ſeveral reſpects defective, but I think it wrong to compare them to Republics; every day they will reſort more to the principles laid down in the fourth note. There will no longer exiſt a Municipal Power, an expreſſion falſe and dangerous, which would induce to believe that the Municipal Officers have ſome appropriate power, whilſt they are only entruſted with the exerciſe of functions. It is the abuſe of the word Power that has created all the authority of Parliaments, which pretended to have the judiciary power. Words have great influence over men, an effect of prejudice which philoſophers ſhould endeavour to rectify. The nation delegates no part of its power to Municipal Officers or Magiſtrates, it only intruſts to them the exerciſe of a certain portion of that power, namely, the diſcharge of functions. Every Conſtitution where it is defective ought

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to be directed to this principle; our Conſtitution deviates from it in many points, but may eaſily be brought back by augmenting and fortifying the action of the Diſtricts and Departments upon the Municipalities, and that of the KING upon the Departments, and by rendering the vigilance of the Legiſlature over Miniſters very ſevere and rigid. It is thus only that liberty can be eſtabliſhed; it cannot exiſt while the Municipalities claim the immediate right of watching over the agents of authority, whilſt they ſhall denounce, &c. &c. But all theſe inconveniences, and a great many others, by no means exiſt in the conſtitution, and will be remedied in proportion as it is completed.

(27) Mr. BURKE is deceived, when he ſays, that the Revolution has deſtroyed the National ſpirit; on the contrary, I am of opinion, that it has given it a proper direction; the luxury and corruption of the Court, which had everywhere ſpread their baleful influence, had degraded the nation; every thing was to be purchaſed by money; money was the ſole recompence of ſoldiers and prieſts; they were ambitious of honours, and of the favour of the Prince only, in order to obtain wealth; a Biſhop, a General of an army were inceſſant in the demand of money. This vile and ſhameful paſſion had metamorphoſed the French, and eſpecially the Great, into a mere herd of Stock-jobbers on their knees before a Crown. True honour, the manly and generous French loyalty, their fidelity in obſerving their engagements are not deſtroyed, and if our manners become ſomewhat ſevere, they will not become ferocious, in ſpite of ruffians, and thoſe who ſuborned them.

(28) Demagogues deſtroy the deſpot, only in order to inherit the deſpotiſm; there is as much meanneſs in ſerving them as in ſerving Miniſters; there is more puſillanimity in fearing them.

I ought here to repeat, that I did not intend to refute Mr. BURKE; but I am not afraid to aſſert, that to one, who would wiſh to undertake it, the taſk would not be difficult; he is diffuſe in his principles; he is miſtaken in his facts: his work appears to me the production of an honeſt man, informed of the misfortunes that have happened, but ignorant either of the ancient Government, or the object of our diſputes, or the principles admitted by the true friends of the Conſtitution. He is not acquainted with our beſt authors, for he quotes none of them; and he mentions as an authority the Revolutions of France and Brabant, by M. CAMILLE DESMOULINS; he is ignorant of our Conſtitution, for he ſpeaks of three degrees of election, which do not exiſt; he attacks the diviſion of the kingdom, which may have, and which has imperfections, but which is preferable to the former irregularity; in a word, he inceſſantly takes the preſent ſtate of affairs for the Conſtitution,

Conſtitution, and he is deceived. It advances to the proper point; whatever may be ſaid, it will be completed, and an enlightened ſpirit makes ſuch progreſs, that the return of troubles appears very improbable. The Ariſtocrats are extinguiſhed, the Demagogues are regarded in the proper point of view; nothing remains but to inſpire the true friends of liberty with a ſufficient degree of energy to ſecond the opinion, that it will ſupport and bear them out upon every exigency.

Mr. Burke is continually taking for the French nation, a vile herd of ruffians, who are guilty of outrages, and titled ruffians, ſtill more vile, by whom they are encouraged, ſupported, and employed: If he were to ſpend ſome time here, he would ſee, that theſe are far from forming the nation, and conſtitute only a very ſmall part; he would ſee that true Frenchmen glow with the ſacred love of liberty; but that they are far from wiſhing or approving outrages; he would ſee, that if they ſhudder with horror at the bare idea of calling down upon the factious the popular vengeance, they will not exempt them from the judgment of the tribunal of public opinion, a dreadful tribunal, and which has already done

done them juſtice. Yes, reſpectable Citizens will form themſelves into a body, they will feel their own ſtrength; it is inconceivable; they will avenge the French nation for the calumnies, of which the factious ruffians have furniſhed a pretext; they will bow under no yoke: animated by their noble pride of freedom, and their high ſenſe of honour, they will brave fanatical proſcription, as they have braved Miniſterial violence; they will not deſert their country; they will defend—they will ſave it; and Mr. BURKE will one day be forced to acknowledge that the French Nation was worthy of liberty; that they knew how to acquire, eſtabliſh, and preſerve it in ſpite of Miniſters, Ariſtocrats, Demagogues, and Ruffians.